

Clinical Assessments

Judge Karen Lawson

Lake County Juvenile Court

The Clinical Assessment Department is a vital part of the Juvenile Court's resource potential for accurate diagnosis and timely intervention for children in need of psychological service. At this time, the Clinical Assessment Department functions in several areas:

1. On referral from the Judge or other parts of the Court, a child and his/her family will receive a psychological evaluation with respect to emotional status and need for treatment.
2. Evaluations focus on the child's emotional problems, motives and needs, with an emphasis on family system factors that either impair or enhance the child's overall mental health and emotional development. If learning disorders, chemical dependency concerns, or medical problems are discovered, referral is made for more detailed assessment at appropriate agencies outside of the Court.
3. Evaluations are used for any of several purposes: judicial disposition, treatment planning, appropriate placement planning, and referral to outside mental health or medical resources, direct parent guidance on the basis of the evaluation, consultation advice to other involved parts of the Court (Probation Officers, Court Educational Services, and Juvenile Detention Center.)
4. In addition to its evaluation function, the Clinical Assessment Department also provides short term (crisis intervention) psychotherapy to children and families on a selective basis. This is done by a Psychology Assistant under the direct supervision of the Clinical Assessments Director.
5. Every in-crisis youth entering the Detention Center remaining for more than two days is interviewed by the Psychology Assistant. Short term (crisis intervention) psychotherapy is provided to those youth in need while being detained. If the youth is currently involved in active counseling, a working relationship with that counselor is established by the Psychology Assistant.
6. Within the Court itself, the Clinical Assessment Department provides consultation to other Court personnel: Prevention Staff, Probation Officers, Teachers of the Court Educational Services, and Juvenile Corrections Staff at the Detention Center.

Finally, as a matter of conviction and policy, the Clinical Assessment Department believes in the maintenance and support of the family unit as the primary irreplaceable vehicle for child development. Consequently, every effort is made to help parents to raise their own children in a mentally healthy way with a minimum of outside intervention.